

By the Kansas State Historical Society

Famous Kansan



Blackbear Bosin
1921-1980

Blackbear Bosin loved to paint and to draw. When he was a young boy he started drawing with crayons at school. His teachers did not like it when he spent so much time drawing. One time they took away his crayons! Bosin did not let that stop him. He continued to draw and sharpened his skills. Later Bosin sold his drawings to earn money to go to school.

When he was born, Blackbear Bosin was named Francis *Tsante-Kongia* Bosin. In English those words mean "Blackbear." His mother was Comanche and his father was Kiowa. Bosin was named after his great grandfather. Bosin developed his own style of painting. This made his paintings unique. Bosin said he could hear a song in his head. He tried to paint that song. He said it was like telling a story in the colors of paint. Bosin learned his mother's and his father's tribal traditions. He used his paintings as a way to help people understand those traditions.

Bosin liked to draw so much that he wanted to be an artist. He studied art in college. After Bosin finished school he moved to Wichita. There he worked in an aircraft factory drawing pictures of the airplanes. He drew how the airplanes would look when they were built. He enjoyed being able to do art at his job. He also enjoyed being able to go home and paint stories of his traditions. Bosin became known around the world for his art.

Bosin usually painted. He did create one large sculpture that is called *Keeper of the Plains*. This sculpture has become one of Blackbear Bosin's most famous works. It is made of metal and is 44 feet tall. That is as tall as 11 fourth-graders standing on each other's shoulders! It has become a symbol of American Indian culture. Bosin donated it to the city of Wichita where it can be seen from far away.

Blackbear Bosin wanted to be known as an artist. He painted so people could learn about American Indians. Bosin's painting style helped other American Indian artists learn to paint about their traditions.

